

# Texas Disability Integration Newsletter

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### About this Newsletter

This newsletter is published by the *Texas Disability Task Force (DTF) on Emergency Management*, an advisory group sponsored by the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM). The newsletter will be published on a quarterly basis and will include information, accomplishments, and initiatives related to emergency management preparedness and response activities at the local, regional, state, and organizational levels that are inclusive of people with disabilities.

If you would like to submit an article, please send an e-mail to [gisela.ryan-bunger@dps.texas.gov](mailto:gisela.ryan-bunger@dps.texas.gov).

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## September is National Preparedness Month

*Gisela Ryan-Bunger, State Coordinator,  
Texas Division of Emergency Management*

Ever wonder what the origin of National Preparedness Month is? Since September 11, 2001, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has taken steps to encourage all citizens to make their own survival preparations. September was chosen as National Preparedness Month, as the tragedies of September 11, 2001 highlighted to the nation the importance of being prepared. Also September has been chosen partly because of the peak of the [Atlantic hurricane season](#) is in mid-September. However, preparedness shouldn't stop as September comes and goes. Being prepared as a citizen or a community is a 365 day a year responsibility.

For emergency managers, preparedness is an on-going effort to ensure jurisdictional emergency operation plans are current, exercised, and lessons learned are incorporated into those preparedness plans. September is a great opportunity and reminder as part of National Preparedness Month to pull out those plans and review them and then ask the question "does our emergency operations plan include whole community planning; planning for people with disabilities and access and/or functional needs?" If the answer is no, your emergency plan is incomplete. Provided below are several links that can assist emergency managers in whole community planning:

<https://www.acl.gov/programs/emergency-preparedness>  
<https://www.ada.gov/emergencyprepguide.htm>  
[https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odc/fnss\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odc/fnss_guidance.pdf)

Effective Communications Toolkit:

<https://www.preparingtexas.org/preparedness.aspx?page=df9e78fc-3f14-4c6c-aad8-7a2b90c425ef>

Functional Needs Support Services (FNSS) Tool Kit:

<https://www.preparingtexas.org/preparedness.aspx?page=32137bc8-eed7-42bb-ad7e-2765fd8abdb9>

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## **Santa Fe Strong Inclusive Senior Celebration**

*Laura M. Norman, Galveston County Office of  
Emergency Management*



As Santa Fe High School's graduating class of 2018 was preparing to celebrate their Commencement, a gunman left 10 dead and 13 wounded inside the fine

arts wing on Friday morning, May 18, 2018. This mass casualty incident brought the school year to a devastating halt. Investigations took the place of preparations; and funerals took the place of the normal senior year rites of passage.

On May 24, 2018, Tilman Fertitta, owner of the Houston Rockets, made a fast break to assist Santa Fe with a much needed win by hosting the 2018 Senior Class of Santa Fe High School at Game 5 of the NBA Western Conference Finals against the Golden State Warriors. Nearly 300 Santa Fe students of all abilities were given a fun and restorative break from the heartbreaking aftermath of the tragic school shooting.



At the request of Santa Fe Independent School District (ISD) and the City of Santa Fe, the Galveston County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) provided disability inclusive planning for the event.

In coordination with the Gulf Coast Center, Galveston County Critical Incident Management Team, Texas Division of Emergency Management, Texas Children's Hospital Trauma and Grief Center and Texas Search and Rescue; Galveston County OEM supported Santa Fe ISD faculty and administration in the transportation and supervision of Santa Fe seniors of all abilities to the Toyota Center in Houston. Approximately 30 law enforcement vehicles from throughout

Galveston County and the region escorted the students as they caravanned through rush hour traffic in a variety of busses to ensure equal access for all students. Commuters witnessing the processional winding through the freeways, pulled over to the side, many doffing their hats and saluting the seniors as they passed through the city.

Upon arrival at the Toyota Center, the Santa Fe seniors who receive special education services and those with access and functional needs were provided personal assistance and support as needed with trained personnel to ensure that they were fully integrated into the general population of those attending the basketball game. Prior to attending the game, trauma specialists from Texas Children's Hospital's Trauma and Grief Center were consulted. They suggested that the loud pyrotechnics that mark the usual beginning of the playoff games might trigger anxiety in those students still suffering from the acute traumatic stress associated with the May 18<sup>th</sup> shooting. The Toyota Center and the Houston Rockets agreed and all of the students were able to enjoy a lively pregame light show without the stress of the loud noises. Counselors, mental health professionals, caretakers and medical professionals were on hand to support the chaperones throughout the game and ensure that all students were included and fully integrated into the event.

As the evening progressed, the crowd cheering loudly for the Houston Rockets along with the pounding music became too much for some of the Santa Fe students. Students with sensory disorders, students with autism spectrum disorder and those students who were feeling overwhelmed by the noisy congestion were given an opportunity to enjoy the game from a quiet room with friends and mental health professionals who accompanied them to the game.

The score of the playoff game was close and the crowd hung on until the last minutes of victory. In order to ensure that all of the students could enjoy the triumphant final winning shots, the care givers that accompanied the students to the game, identified safe wheelchair exits in advance to avoid the pressing crowd teeming down from the stadium.

The final win of the night was delivering the Santa Fe Senior High School Class of 2018 safely home to their waiting parents.

## Introducing the New FEMA Region VI Regional Disability Integration Advisor



We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce and welcome Ms. Christin Bradley, the new FEMA Region VI Regional Disability Integration Advisor. With 10 years of experience working with the Disability Community, Christin Bradley, and former Special Education Teacher for the

Department of Defense Education System decided to change career paths into the world of Emergency Management. In June 2016, she accepted a position as a Disability Integration Advisor for the Office of Disability Integration Coordination in Washington DC-Head Quarters. During her role as a Disability Integration Advisor, she had the opportunity to respond to over 4 different disasters to ensure that services for individuals with disabilities were fully accessible for individuals with disabilities across all FEMA Programs. Below are the following Disasters she responded to:

- Louisiana Floods Disaster in Baton Rouge, Louisiana August 2016-October 2016
- Hurricane Matthew in North Carolina October 2016- August 2017
- Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Texas August 2017- January 2018
- Hurricane Maria in San Juan, Puerto Rico January 2018- Present

After two years working as Disability Integration Advisor for FEMA Headquarters, she accepted a position this past May 2018 as the Regional Disability Integration Advisor for Region 6. In her new Role as the Regional Disability Integration Advisor she provides guidance to 5

states that include New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas to ensure that the access and functional needs and requirements of individuals with disabilities are being properly included and addressed in all aspects of emergency preparedness, disaster response, and recovery. She also works to build community partnerships across all areas including federal, state, local, and tribal by providing training and sharing information that increases the overall understanding of the needs of people with disabilities.

She believes that bringing together representatives from all areas promotes a broader and richer understanding and effectively utilizes subject matter expertise, as well as improves on services, programs and activities related to disasters.

Christin received her Bachelor's Degree in Special Education from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, NC, Her Master's Degree in Human Services with a concentration in leadership from Northeastern University, Boston Massachusetts, and is finishing up her last year in her Special Education Leadership Doctoral Program from Capella University. Above all she has a passion for working with individuals with disabilities and educating society on how to be more inclusive of all people.